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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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July 1, 2020

Chair E. Joaquin Esquivel and Board Members
State Water Resources Control Board
P.O. Box 100
Sacramento, CA 95812-0100

Dear Chair Esquivel and Board Members:


I write in opposition to the California Department of Conservation's Application for the Cat Canyon Aquifer Exemption to expand oil and gas production in the Cat Canyon Oil Field. As you know, I have sent prior letters requesting that this process be put on hold until the United States Geological Survey (USGS) completes the pending study of oil, gas and groundwater in the Cat Canyon Oil Field. I urge the Board to incorporate the results from the USGS study in the analysis of the Application to inform adherence to the state's criteria for exempting an aquifer.

Additionally, local Santa Barbara County constituents have submitted technical comments by Dr. Barry Keller, PhD, and Dr. Jay C. Means, PhD, which I believe is advisable to be taken into consideration as it demonstrates the potential for injected fluids to migrate vertically into freshwater aquifers through underground pathways, like faults and existing wells. Furthermore, it indicates that seismic activity in the Field could exacerbate existing pathways or form new conduits for contamination to travel upward into groundwater aquifers relied upon by local communities for drinking and businesses for agricultural uses. With the possibility of complex mixtures of chemicals within injected fluids, the potential for adverse impacts through migration to drinking water is a significant concern. As you know, I represent the nearby communities of Sisquoc and Los Alamos, which rely entirely on groundwater for drinking water.

Through your Board's own Oil and Gas Regional Groundwater Monitoring Program, the State Water Resources Control Board, in collaboration with the USGS, is gathering evidence of possible groundwater contamination in the Cat Canyon Oil Field from existing oil and gas operations. The groundwater study in Cat Canyon is intended to determine not only when oil-field fluids are present in groundwater, but also the pathways by which the contamination may have traveled to reach fresh groundwater resources. The results of this study are therefore directly relevant to the effects of water quality. A decision on this Application prior to a thorough and comprehensive evaluation of the results from the Cat Canyon groundwater study would be entirely premature.

I appreciate your consideration to my request to put a decision on hold related to the California Department of Conservation's Application for the Cat Canyon Aquifer Exemption until USGS completes its groundwater study.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Carbal", written in a cursive style.

SALUD CARBAJAL
Member of Congress